

DEMOCRATS FIGHT TO CHANGE THE SPECIAL-INTEREST MEDICARE Rx DRUG PLAN INTO ONE THAT WORKS FOR BENEFICIARIES

Democrats are fighting for enactment of an emergency measure to ensure that no Medicare beneficiary will leave the pharmacy without their prescription drugs

- In the six weeks of the GOP Medicare Rx drug plan, tens of thousands of beneficiaries have been turned away from pharmacies
- The Bush Administration has told states that they must work with the private drug plans to work out these problems – but this has resulted in many beneficiaries still facing problems in getting their medicines
- To guarantee that beneficiaries do not leave pharmacies empty-handed, this emergency Democratic bill would allow pharmacies to bill Medicare directly for prescriptions filled during this transition period, and receive prompt payments
- This emergency Democratic bill also ensures federal reimbursement for beneficiaries, pharmacies and states for the costs they have incurred over the last several weeks as a result of the failures of the federal drug program to appropriately cover costs

Democrats are fighting for enactment of real measures to bring down the drug prices that Medicare beneficiaries and other Americans have to pay

- Democrats are fighting for a bill that would give Medicare the authority to negotiate with drug companies for lower drug prices; something currently prohibited in the GOP Medicare Rx drug program
- Democrats are also fighting for a bill that would allow all Americans to re-import lower-priced prescription drugs from abroad – as long as strict safety standards are met

Democrats are fighting for extending the enrollment period for the new Medicare drug program by six months

- Because the GOP plan was written to meet the needs of drug companies and HMOs and not seniors and people with disabilities, it is unnecessarily complicated and confusing
- Many beneficiaries are bewildered by the number of plans and decisions and need more time to make an informed decision
- To give beneficiaries more time to make a choice, the Democratic bill would extend the enrollment period by six months and delay the late-enrollment penalty
- It is important to allow beneficiaries to take their time, check their facts, and know their options without being rushed to choose
- Currently, those who sign up past the May 15 deadline will face a significant penalty – an increase in monthly premiums of 1 percent for every month past the deadline. Furthermore, if a beneficiary misses the deadline, they will not have the ability to enroll again until November 15. This means that they will automatically be subject to a 7 percent minimum penalty for the rest of their lives.

Democrats are also fighting to allow Medicare beneficiaries to obtain their prescription drug benefit directly from Medicare – not a private insurance company

- Democrats believe Medicare beneficiaries should have the option of enrolling in a nationwide drug plan provided directly by Medicare – not through a private insurance company
- The premium, deductible, co-payments, and covered drugs would be uniform across the country
- The Medicare-administered drug plan would mirror the system currently in place for all other Medicare benefits
- A Medicare-administered drug plan is likely to be quite popular – eliminating the confusion many beneficiaries face